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Course Syllabus

Instructor Information

Name: Benjamin Vollmer, PhD

College: College of Journalism

Department: Department of Media Production, Management, and Technology

Contact/Email: bvollmer@ufl.edu

Class Hours and Location: Wednesday (1:55- 4:55 PM), WEIM 3024

Office Hours: Wednesday (After Class) / Monday 2 PM EST OR by appointment via Zoom

Contact Tip: Make sure to give me 48 hours during the weekday to respond to emails! Usually I'm much faster than that, but my response speed can depend on several factors.

Course Description and Contents

UF Guidelines

For all necessary information regarding UF guidelines, please [see the following link!](#)

Description

This course offers a newwave approach to storytelling by exploring the dynamic world of emerging and interactive media, alongside media staples such as film and television. Students will learn to craft stories and scripts for diverse platforms, including video scripts, commercials, short films, games, television, and content creation for various digital mediums. Emphasizing practical application, the course enables students to develop, pitch, and refine their ideas. A core objective is to enhance students' critical writing and editing skills, empowering them to effectively analyze and critique various forms of media narratives, including their own creations. Participants will engage in in-class collaborative brainstorming and individual assignments, culminating in a portfolio of diverse scripts and pitches tailored to contemporary media platforms. Evaluation will be determined through rubrics and improvement.

Course Tip: A big part of this course will be taking ideas you have and turning them into something practical. By the end of the course, you will have ~~one~~ fully fleshed out pitch to carry you forward after the class is over.

Contents

1. Students will be tasked with designing a creative portfolio by the end of the semester. These will include a variety of creative works.
 - a. Log-line page
 - b. Short-form content script
 - c. Inciting Incident content script
 - d. Stranger Rides Through Town exercise
 - e. Full scene content script
 - f. Media Kits
 - g. Final Pitch
2. Students will also be tasked with critiquing and editing different works. This will include a variety of different options and mediums that will be under observation.
 - a. Short-form scripted content
 - b. Commercials and marketing copy
 - c. Films
 - d. Television shows
 - e. Interactive stories: games, virtual reality, podcasts, and ~~web~~ based stories
 - f. A presentation on a creative work of your choosing

Philosophy and Expectations

It's not just enough to be creative, you have to be able to focus that creativity into tangible projects. In this course, students are encouraged to fully engage with the dynamic world of emerging and interactive media. Adhering to university policies, regular attendance is vital for active participation and collaborative learning. Meeting deadlines is crucial for maintaining the course's momentum and ensuring a cohesive learning experience. Assignments should be completed as specified, reflecting each student's creativity and understanding of the course material. Active involvement in discussions, teamwork for group discussions, and participation in weekly critiques are vital, as they serve as key opportunities for students to explore and expand their storytelling skills in new media contexts.

My role as your instructor will be to provide thorough and critical feedback, both verbally in class and directly through your assignments. Adapting and progressing this feedback is a vital portion of the class. If students are learning and progressing, ~~then~~ they will succeed in this class. It is expected that students will respond professionally and gracefully to this feedback.

Course Rules

Attendance and Late Work

There will not be many course rules to abide by, but in the interest of consistency and clarity, students will be asked to do the following:

1. If you cannot come to class, please make sure to contact me **ahead of time** to let me know. This will involve an excused absence in compliance with [UF's attendance policies](#).
2. Late work is accepted, but will come with the following penalties assuming the late work is not excused:
 - a. 10% off if submitted within 48 hours late
 - b. 25% off if submitted within a week late
 - c. 50% off if submitted any time after a week late
3. Please check the Canvas page for updates several times a week. Updates and course notes will be sent through Canvas and students are expected to be aware of this.
4. If you have questions about an assignment or something related to the course, you must ask **before** the respective work is due.
5. Students will respect each other in class. This includes being patient and having meaningful discussions with others. This class is meant to be inclusive and based in having a sense of community between classmates.
6. Students are expected to actively participate in the class.

Class Tip: If you are typically a little more quiet in class, participation can be achieved in a variety of ways. Thorough feedback, being in class on time, actively listening to your classmates, and providing strong ideas through your work.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center [Click here](#) to get started with the Disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with me so that we can discuss your needs as early as possible. I'd like to make this process as easy as possible, so do not feel badly about approaching me should you need to.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online [here](#).. Evaluations are typically open during

the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students [here](#).

Materials & Resources

While there are no mandatory readings in this class, students will be expected to observe different storytelling mediums throughout the course. This includes watching film, television, commercials, creative content, and playing video games. Here are some resources you can familiarize yourself with (none are mandatory):

- [Kanopy](#), a movie streaming service with access through a University of Florida account
- [YouTube](#), for watching short-form creative content
- [Steam](#), for finding video game content
- [Canva](#), for developing media kits and portfolios
- [Google Drive](#), for organizing your created work
- [Celtx](#), software for writing scripts and screenplays
- [Save The Cat](#), the dominant screenwriting framework focused on plot devices.

Class Tip: If you ever need help tracking something down, ask me or send me an email!

Assessment and Grades

Assessment Philosophy

Students will be assessed by their ability to meet rubric standards (on a per assignment basis) as well as improve their skills, respective to feedback, as the course continues. This course will assume a flexible grading style that encourages effort and participation, a willingness to follow instructions, and the aforementioned improvement.

This class will focus on a handful of assignments due every other week. These assignments will often include two separate segments - one for observation, editing, or critique, and the other for student-designed creative work. It's expected that every student will have a different path to success. This course design should reward students who want to better themselves and their creative abilities.

Grade Breakdown

Please observe [UF's grading policy](#), which will be aligned with how grades are documented in this course.

- [Creative Course Work \(25%\)](#)
 - This includes assignments such as your log-line page, the short form content script, and the 'Stranger Rides Through Town' exercise
- [Critical Course Work \(25%\)](#)
 - This includes three separate critiques of creative works that you choose. These projects will be submitted alongside your creative course work.
- [Media Kit and Final Pitch \(25%\)](#)
 - This is a collection and presentation of your work over the course of the semester. It will be what you take out into the professional world as evidence of your creativity and work - a portfolio of sorts.
 - The final pitch will be a detailed document of a story you want to create. This will involve characters, storytelling mechanics, plot summaries, and intense world building.
- [Critical Presentation \(12.5%\)](#)
 - Take one creative work you really love or hate (television show, movie, game, novel, etc.) and develop a critical presentation of its contents.
- [Attendance and Participation \(12.5%\)](#)

Brief Project Overview

While creative and critical coursework will be detailed on a biweekly basis, it will be good to have a head start on some of the cumulative projects that will be built toward throughout the course.

Creative Coursework (Bi-Weekly)

These projects will be shorter and involve a brief, inclass brainstorming. They will be due every other week (as seen on the schedule below). These assignments will come alongside a rubric, but the important thing to note is that you'll be creating *original* work, and that this should be something you can build on for a real project down the road. Think of these as creative drafts they are meant to exercise your creative muscles. This work should build toward your final pitch.

Critical Coursework (Three Assignments)

These projects will be more reflective. Alongside your creative coursework, you'll submit a critical examination of content that mirrors whatever we are working on during the respective weeks. For example, if you are submitting a shortform content script, you can track down a popular scripted YouTube video and figure out what makes it so good (or perhaps, where it could have improved). These examinations will be no more than two pages long, double spaced.

Some weeks you will have the ability to choose from a wide-range of creative content to critique. This will help hone your critical thinking skills.

Media Kit (April 29th)

A media kit will be your portfolio moving forward. This should be the beginning of a living, breathing document that shows and highlights your work for the professional creative world. Media kits have become intensely popular among content creators, as it's an easy way to establish and convey your personal brand with potential collaborators, sponsors, or producers.

This will be your opportunity to brag about your work and put a visual flair on it. You should be working on this throughout the semester.

Final Pitch (April 22nd)

This will be the start of a creative endeavor that will propel you into the professional world. This pitch can be about any creative form that we've covered throughout the semester. Ideas include but are not limited to: films, television shows, video games, commercials (series), shortform content (series), or interactive content. This is something you will be working on throughout the semester. This pitch will involve a detailed breakdown of the following:

- Log-line
- World design
 - Setting
 - World building elements
 - History
 - "Stranger Rides Through Town" revised
- One example scene in script form
- Character arcs with a beginning, middle, and end
- One unique-selling point (USP) - something your story does that we haven't seen
- Story arc with a beginning, middle, and end
- Critical examination of **your own** work

Critical Presentation (Scheduled)

Throughout the semester, we will have two-four students present a critical examination of a piece of content that you enjoy or have a lot to say about. These presentations will be between five-ten minutes long, and should have a visual element to them (so Powerpoint or designed video).

These presentations will include the following:

- An examination of what the story is REALLY about


- Articulates what made the storytelling interesting
- Articulates what makes the visualization interesting
- A critical examination of what the project did well
- A critical examination of what the project could have done better

If you do not like to present live - that is okay. You will be able to design a five-ten minute critique, fully edited, for presentation instead.

Schedule

It should be noted that this course schedule is FLEXIBLE and likely will change as the semester progresses. This should serve as an outline, however, for what we are working on in the class and when you are prepared to turn things in.

 = Assignment Due

 = Important Class Note

 = In-Class Activity

WEEK	DATE	CLASS NOTES
ONE	AUG 26th	Introductions Syllabus Overview
TWO	SEP 3rd	On Log Lines How To Be Critical Finding Creators
THREE	SEP 10th	Due: Log Line Page Share: Log Line Examples Practicing Concision How to Create in the Short-Form
FOUR	SEP 17th	Due: Critical Response #1 Brainstorm: Short-Form Ideas Practicing Clarity What's a Unique Selling Point? Critically Examining Short-Form Content
FIVE	SEP 24th	Due: Short-Form Content Script

		Share: Short-Form Log Lines and USPs Marketing Our Ideas
SIX	OCT 1st	Brainstorm: Showing Traits Show Don't Tell Critically Examining Film
SEVEN	OCT 8th	Due: Showing Content Script Share: Showing Script Storytelling Identity and Creativity
EIGHT	OCT 15th	Due: Critical Response #2 Brainstorm: Ideas That Can't Work Designing Worlds What About the Stranger?
NINE	OCT 23rd	Due: Stranger Rides Through Town Share: Worldbuilding Critique Interactive Mediums
TEN	OCT 30th	Catch Up Class NO ASSIGNMENT
ELEVEN	NOV 5th	Due: Abbreviated Pitch Brainstorm: Catch Up Media Kits On Character Arcs Getting a Pitch Ready
TWELVE	NOV 12th	Due: Critical Response #3 Share: Character Arcs On Story Arcs
THIRTEEN	NOV 19th	Brainstorm: Word and Color Association Exercise: Revising Log Line Revisions and Editing Due: Story Script
FOURTEEN	NOV 26th	Course Rewind Exercise: Table Read Storytelling Structure
FIFTEEN	DEC 3rd	Due: Final Pitch Final Class Pitch Presentations Elaborating on Media Kits and Portfolios

Other Notes

Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Conduct Code](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult the instructor of this course. Plagiarism will absolutely not be tolerated.

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to

another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student.

Other Resources

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352 392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website or call 352 392-1111 (or 911 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352 733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.


GatorWell Health Promotion Services For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352 73-4450.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.



[Student Complaints On-Campus](#): Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

[On-Line Students Complaints](#): View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.

